

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 8, 2015

Founders Day

We had a truly memorable Founders Day event last Thursday despite some less-than-perfect weather. Due to the rain, events were moved inside the University Center, which accommodated the large number of people beautifully. Seeing faculty, staff, students, emeriti and community members together in the UC was a dramatic example of what an important resource the building is in creating community at Ferris. I cannot help but think how impressed Woodbridge and Helen Ferris would be at their school today – not just with the physical expansion of campus, but in the ways their school has remained faithful to the vision and values they set forth 131 years ago.

Inside the UC many campus and community organizations had tables that provided information for our students, and encouraged their engagement with them. The Ferris Pride Committee gave away 700 Ferris water bottles in the first two hours, and their T-shirt exchange – in which shirts from other universities were traded for a Ferris shirt – collected three boxes of shirts which will be donated to care agencies. Ferris' office of Governmental Relations and General Counsel sponsored our annual ice cream social, which featured members of our university and local community as celebrity servers.

Before our annual picnic I made a few comments about our university, its past, present and future. If you were unable to attend, a pdf file of the presentation, along with explanatory “sticky notes,” is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2015-2016/Founders-Day-2015.pdf>. I hope you will take a few moments to consider some of the challenges we face, our strategic plans and priorities, and university expectations that will continue have a major impact on our future.

Founders Day and the successful start of classes is made possible by the hard work of many, many people from across the university. It is impossible to provide a complete listing without omitting someone, because everyone contributes to these efforts. This year's Founders Day was one of the most exciting and energizing I can recall. Thank you to everyone involved in making the day such a great success!

Enrollment

There is excellent news to report about out fall 2015 enrollment figures. The official fourth-day count shows that, system-wide, Ferris State University is up 115 students in terms of head-count for a record enrollment of 14,715. Student Credit Hours are up slightly by 233. Given the fact that we are in a long-term trend of decreasing numbers of high-school graduates in the state, this is a very positive reflection of the efforts we have put into maintaining – and even increasing – our enrollment in the face of such difficult demographics.

An important part of this is our ability to retain students. Here, the news is again record-setting. We retained 80 percent of our first-year full-time bachelor degree students from a year ago, an eight percent increase. Retention of first-year full-time associate degree students also increased,

to 72 percent, up from 70 percent. Overall first-year retention increased from 71 percent to 75 percent, also a university record.

The enrollment numbers show that we are also becoming a more diverse university. Compared to fall 2014, Ferris enrolled 140 more Hispanic students (a 25 percent increase), 97 more international students, (22 percent increase), and 27 more African American students.

There are some areas of decline in these numbers. Kendall College of Art and Design is down 110 students or 7.65 percent. This is reflected in a decline of 1,100 SCH or 7.25 percent. The College of Health Professions is down 156 students, 6.39 percent, and 663 SCH, 4.07 percent. Off-campus enrollment is also slightly down. While head count is the largest in history in Big Rapids, 10,216, and the trend of reducing FTIAC students is reversed, SCH have not increased.

All of this taken together is a remarkable achievement. We are in a very competitive environment in terms of attracting and retaining students, and the success that these figures show was made possible by the entire university working together. I want to especially thank Jeanine Ward-Roof and everyone in Enrollment Services, Paul Blake and our faculty and staff in Academic Affairs, David Pilgrim and Diversity and Inclusion, and Shelly Armstrong and University Advancement and Marketing.

Significant efforts will continue to address enrollment and I am appreciative of everyone who is contributing to these efforts. We have a great base of achievement from which to continue to be successful in our efforts to attract and retain students. Our goal is to be an open, welcoming community, and it is gratifying to see that our efforts are having an effect. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible.

Responsible Employee Information Sessions

The Ferris State University community is committed to being a safe and supportive environment for everyone who studies, teaches and works here. In addition to this going to the core of our tradition and educational mission, such safety and support are enshrined in our core value of Ethical Community. Additionally, sexual violence is strictly prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, which prohibits discrimination based on sex.

Under Title IX the university must take specific action if a responsible employee is made aware of an act of sexual violence or harassment. Most widely interpreted, a “responsible employee” is anyone a student could reasonably believe has the authority to take action to address sexual violence or harassment when it takes place.

This fall semester we are holding seven employee information sessions that outline what to do, and what not to do, if and when a student informs you about an occurrence of sexual violence or harassment, or you feel that a student *may* inform you of such information. The schedule for these sessions is as follows:

- Wednesday, Sept. 9, 1-:50 p.m., FLITE 438
- Tuesday, Sept. 22, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Alumni 121
- Thursday, Oct. 8, 3:45-5 p.m., IRC
- Wednesday, Oct. 21, 10-11 a.m., UCB 211
- Friday, Nov. 6, 11 a.m.-Noon, FLITE 133
- Wednesday, Nov. 18, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Alumni 121
- Monday, Nov. 30, 2-3 p.m., UCB 202A

I would encourage you to attend one of these events. Special sessions will be scheduled for departments, offices, and colleges that request it. I would also encourage you to review the information about Title IX on our compliance page, which you can access at <http://www.ferris.edu/title-ix/>. Unfortunately, sexual violence can happen anywhere. Attending one of these information sessions will help you to be a resource to help someone in need, or to prevent, or minimize, an instance of sexual violence or harassment. We never know when we may be called upon to assist. Thank you in advance for taking time to be prepared to help others.

Athletics

With the fall 2015 semester underway, student-athletes have returned to competition. Our men's and women's cross country teams, women's tennis team and women's volleyball team all experienced early season success this past weekend.

The men's and women's cross country teams hosted the 41st annual Ray Helsing Bulldog Invitation at our Katke Golf Course. Our Bulldogs had the top-10 finishers in the men's race, and the women brought home the top-eight overall. Women's tennis defeated Lake State 8-1 on Friday and Michigan Tech 9-0 on Saturday.

Our nationally ranked women's volleyball team finished the weekend with a perfect 4-0 record in the Ferris State Invitational, defeating Missouri Western State University, California University of Pennsylvania, Metro State University of Denver and McKendree University. If you attended one of the team's matches last year, you know how exciting these competitions are. This is a very good start to their season.

All of our student-athletes deserve our support. I hope that you will consider attending one of their matches this year, if you are not already in the habit of doing so. This coming week there are a number of home matches: women's soccer hosts Indiana Wesleyan at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 9, and our nationally ranked men's football team hosts Northwood University at Top Taggart Field next Saturday, Sept. 12, at 7 p.m. Best wishes to all as they begin their competitive seasons.

The full schedule of our teams' upcoming competitions is available at <http://www.ferrisstatebulldogs.com/composite>. On behalf of our student-athletes, thank you for supporting them both in the classroom as well as in competition.

David L. Eisler, president